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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR ECA/PE/V/F/A, WHA/PDA; WHA/AND  
GUAYAQUIL FOR NOUHRA

E.O. 12958:

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SUBJECT: Results Report: Andean Parliamentary  
Study Tour (October 16-23)

1. Summary: Participants reported that the trip provided excellent insight into how democracy functions in the US, the role of multilateral institutions and impressions of Latin America. They were particularly struck by the influence and independence of the Congress and the US system of checks and balances. They also were impressed by how much research goes into formulating legislation and how, ultimately, national interests overcome political partisanship, at least as compared to Ecuadorian politics. They also found meetings with the World Bank and other multilateral institutions to be especially useful. End summary.

2. Date: October 16-23, 2005, first quarter, FY 06.

3. MPP Theme and Audience Reached: Strengthening Democracy.

4. Justification and Objective: To expose open-minded members of congress to the US, with a focus on constituent outreach and political reform.

5. Description of Activity: One week study tour in Washington, D.C. organized by the National Democratic Institute through a grant from the Office of Citizen Exchanges.

6. Result/Impact: Excellent. Highlights follow:

The Ecuadorian participants said they felt privileged to have been chosen to participate in this study tour. They learned a great deal about the US political system and also found it extremely beneficial to talk to fellow members of congress from other Andean nations. This contact with foreign counterparts helped to highlight the advantages Ecuador enjoys over its neighbors, most importantly the lack of violent conflicts.

One visitor, Carlos Kure, remarked that the US Congress has much more power than its Ecuadorian counterpart, and noted the importance of the system of checks and balances in ensuring better government. Another participant, Diego Monsalve, was impressed by the level of research done during the legislation drafting process. He noted that, for example, in the US economic experts help formulate economic policy whereas in Ecuador, economic policy decisions are driven by political motivations.

Omar Simon, who accompanied the members of congress as a representative of local NGO Citizen Participation, noted that the US has political influences, but that the strength of its institutions overcomes political partisanship.

The participants found meetings with multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and IDB to be very useful. They reported that the meeting at USAID was the least productive, though Sandra Sandoval remarked that it was interesting to learn how the US views Latin America and to see that other Andean nations share some of Ecuador's challenges. As a whole, the group found the experience very useful both in understanding the US and in shaping how they approach policy-making in Ecuador.

7. Media Coverage: N/A.

8. Non-USG Support: N/A.

9. Quality of Support: Excellent. The visitors said the program was very well organized.

JEWELL